

TRIBUTE TO PRESIDENT SOGLO
OF BENIN

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 30, 1995

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my support for the initiatives of the Government of Benin. Benin, a country the size of Pennsylvania with a population of 5 million, is located in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea. It captured international attention when in 1991 it was the first African nation to democratically elect a head of state, President Nicéphore Soglo, a former World Bank director and friend of the United States of America.

Over the last 5 years President Soglo and his administration have instituted a series of economic reforms intended to reduce debt, increase exports, control inflation, and foster growth in general. By 1992 Benin's economy began to respond and by the first quarter of this year, economic growth was evident. As a result of this economic turnaround, investment possibilities abound in many of Benin's industries, especially oil production and agriculture. Benin is clearly one African country setting out to disprove the notion that the continent is becoming marginalized.

One of the most important of Benin's economic reforms was the devaluation of its currency, the CFA franc, in 1994. As a member of the West African Monetary Union, Benin uses the CFA—French for African Financial Community—franc which is tied to and supported by the French franc and is fully convertible. The overvalued CFA franc had skewed the economy towards trade rather than investment which is necessary for growth. "Finance & Development" magazine stated in a June, 1995 article that, since the devaluation, member countries of the franc zone have made great strides toward economic recovery. The goal of the devaluation was to help member nations regain competitiveness by shifting resources from low growth sectors, often artificially protected, to sectors where the country enjoyed a comparative advantage. These objectives were largely met in Benin, as evidenced by the growth in GDP, limited inflation, and improved balance of payments.

Benin has numerous resource-based enterprises which offer many investment opportunities for American businesses. One of the most promising is oil and gas. An offshore petroleum field is located near Cotonou, the principal city in Benin, and 4 billion cubic meters of gas reserves were recently discovered in the Seme oil field. These discoveries have generated serious attention in the World Bank plans for a major natural gas trunk line from Nigeria to run west through Benin, Togo, and Ghana.

Recently, many American investment houses have started to see Africa as an economic area on the cusp of exploding growth, the last true emerging market.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Government must support all efforts of African nations like Benin to democratize and continue on the path of economic reform and growth. The Government of Benin's efforts will mark a new era not only in West Africa but in all of Africa.

THE FLAG IS THE SYMBOL OF
OUR COUNTRY

HON. END G. WALDHOLTZ

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 30, 1995

Mrs. WALDHOLTZ. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. flag is the symbol of our country. It is proudly carried into battle, and it is the basis for our national anthem. It's more than a simple piece of cloth; it is the symbol of what we stand for as a nation.

Over the years, Congress has repeatedly attempted to pass legislation that would prevent desecration of our national flag. Each time, the public has expressed their overwhelming and enthusiastic support.

Unfortunately, and in my view incorrectly, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that burning the American flag is merely a form of free expression, and the Court overturned Congress' attempt to reflect the public's desire to protect this Nation's most treasured symbol. With that ruling, the Supreme Court left us with no alternative but to pass a constitutional amendment.

The Court's action left us with an ironic result: It is illegal to deface a mailbox or to mangle our currency—either act carries a criminal penalty—but it is not illegal to desecrate the flag. Personally, I am not comfortable with what that says about our values as a Government.

In the wake of the Supreme Court action, 49 States have passed resolutions calling on Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to protect our flag from desecration and send it back to the States for ratification. I would have preferred to resolve this issue with statutory language rather than through a constitutional amendment, but we have already attempted that. Congress is not able to pass a statute which we can guarantee will not be overturned by the Supreme Court.

Our action reflects the will of the American people to protect and preserve the most cherished symbol of this great Nation.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY WITH
TAXPAYER DOLLARS

HON. ERNEST J. ISTOOK, JR.

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 30, 1995

Mr. ISTOOK. Mr. Speaker, please include the following remarks in the RECORD regarding "Political Advocacy with Taxpayer Dollars."

POLITICAL ADVOCACY WITH TAXPAYER DOLLARS VIOLATES THE RIGHTS OF ALL TAXPAYERS

(Testimony of Representative Ernest J. Istook, Jr., June 29, 1995, before the House National Economic Growth, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee)

It is time to end taxpayer funded political advocacy! Over 40,000 organizations receive over \$39 billion in Federal grant funds directly. Preliminary examination of the problem makes it apparent that grant abuse is rampant and needs to be addressed with systemic reform. Systemic reform must not be targeted at any particular group nor any particular political philosophy but must allow the U.S. Congress to perform its fiduciary

responsibility to the American taxpayer. That responsibility requires the Congress to track Federal Budget dollars to their usage point.

I feel strongly that these Federal dollars represent the hard work of many Americans who deserve the assurance that when they are compelled to pay taxes, that these tax dollars are being used appropriately. Using tax dollars for political advocacy not only violates the principles of free speech and free association. Just as the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled (*Aboud v. Detroit Board of Education*, 1977) that compulsory union dues cannot be used to fund political activity, so, too, compulsory taxes should not be used for this purpose. The legislation several of us are working on is but one step, though a major step, in stopping some of the fraud, waste and abuse that plagues the Federal Budget.

The various attempts at addressing taxpayer-funded political advocacy problem have proven to be inadequate. Were this not the case the problem would not continue to be a significant problem. The IRS Code restrictions on many of the non-profit organizations and the Byrd amendment in 1990 have all proven to be inadequate. Though it is technically illegal to use taxpayer funds for lobbying, schemes have been created to circumvent the law. These include automatically sending a certain percentage of grant money to cover overhead for the lobbying arm, and subgranting funds to other organizations, in which case the audit trail ends. Sometimes the laws that exist are so vague and unenforceable that they are not satisfactory. An example of this is the lobby registration and reporting requirement for Congress. Lobbying is not defined in the law, so lobbyists only report time and expenses for time on Capitol Hill, not time spent in the office studying the issues, making phone calls to prepare for visits, etc. The Byrd amendment never defined appropriated funds, so funds are no longer considered appropriated after they've been deposited into the organization's checking account.

The goal is not and never should be to restrict free speech. Instead, the goal is to avoid the use of tax dollars to subsidize the private speech of those who have political connections or who rely on taxpayers' money to advocate their political views.

Upon examination of this problem, I feel the following principles must be put into law regarding the usage of Federal funds by Federal grantees:

a. The term "lobbying" is too narrow to be useful for this purpose. The broader term "political advocacy" should be used and defined under the law. This definition would extend to Federal grantees engaging in political campaigns, lobbying the legislative or executive branch agencies from the Federal to the state and local level, and engaging in efforts to influence general and specific public policy through confirmations, referendums or judicial action.

b. No federal funds should be used for political advocacy.

c. No grant funds should be used to provide support to other organizations who, in turn, conduct political advocacy.

d. No organization that receives a federal grant should, in turn, grant those funds to others, except as provided in the authorizing law that created the organization (i.e. the Institute of Peace, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, etc.) Such grantees should be under the same obligation as if they received the Grant directly from the Federal government. Current law does not require this. This will not include state and local governments, but would include any private entity which receives federal grant funds, passed through to them by state or local governments.